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New York

President: Mr. Frietas do Amaral . . . . . (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Tornado in Bangladesh

The President: Before turning to the items on our agenda for this morning, may I, on behalf of all the members of the Assembly, extend our deepest sympathy to the Government and the people of Bangladesh for the tragic loss of life and extensive material damage which have resulted from the recent tornado.

I also express the hope that the international community will show its solidarity and respond promptly and generously to any request for help.

I now call on the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Ziauddin (Bangladesh): On behalf of the people and the Government of Bangladesh, I wish to thank you most profusely, Mr. President, for your kind words of sympathy and condolence expressed at the death and destruction caused by a tornado that struck and wreaked havoc in northern Bangladesh on Monday, 13 May. I take this opportunity to express our profound gratitude to all the Member States of the United Nations that so spontaneously rose to the occasion and offered their support, both moral and material, at this time of national calamity. I also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his prompt response in offering aid and assistance to alleviate the hardship and suffering of the distressed people.

In a span of about half an hour, the tornado took an awesome toll of over 1,000 deaths and shattered the lives of some 80,000 people. Approximately 10,000 people with serious injuries are being treated in hospitals located in, or in close proximity to, the disaster area. It is also estimated that about 19,965 hectares of crop land have been decimated. Despite such devastation, I should humbly like to inform the Assembly that the Government of Bangladesh has been successful in mobilizing adequate manpower and resources to mitigate the sufferings of the affected people. The national agencies concerned are working round the clock, without rest or respite, to provide assistance and succour, and relief and rehabilitation activities are continuing in full swing.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the Government of Bangladesh has had the good fortune this time to successfully control, by itself, the overall situation resulting from the devastating tornado. The resilience of the people has added immensely to the Government's ability to overcome the grave and grim tragedy.

I wish to express once again, on behalf of the people and the Government of Bangladesh, our deepest gratitude to you, Mr. President, to all the Member States of the United Nations, to the Secretary-General and to the related bodies of this esteemed Organization, for rallying round Bangladesh in generously extending all support at this time of our nation's dire and difficult dilemma.

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Agenda item 17 *(continued)*

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions: report of the Fifth Committee (Part II) (A/50/775/Add.1)

The President: In paragraph 4 of document A/50/775/Add.1, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly should appoint Mr. Evgueni Deineko as a member of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office beginning on 24 May 1996 and ending on 31 December 1996.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint the person recommended above?

It was so decided.

The President: We have thus concluded our consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 17.

Agenda item 23 *(continued)*

Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

Draft resolution (A/50/L.73)

The President: I call on the representative of Venezuela to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.73.

Mr. De Rojas (Venezuela) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is a great honour and a great pleasure for me to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.73, which embodies the results of the informal consultations that have been taking place over the past six months on agenda item 23, pursuant to resolution 48/162. I dare say that it is very gratifying for all delegations present finally to have before us the successful result of such arduous work on such sensitive issues, in which so much common effort has been invested. Now we can sincerely and deservedly congratulate ourselves on the large amount of work accomplished and appreciate its full scope.

Since the moment last November when you, Sir, were kind enough to entrust me with the coordination of these consultations, we have held a total of 36 full days of meetings, in addition to many "informal" consultations, or "hallway" meetings — in many cases coordinated by specific delegations that generously devoted their time and efforts to act as facilitators — as well as countless individual contacts and joint internal discussions within the various groups. All this intensive activity finally led, just a few days ago, to the consensus draft resolution before us today.

Delegations worked on this draft resolution with admirable perseverance and dedication. They never failed to respond to the call for additional sessions or meetings, even though many of these had to take place in uncomfortable conditions, without interpretation or other services, at irregular hours and in the most inclement weather. This proves beyond doubt their firm commitment to the objective of strengthening our United Nations and their readiness to find ways around any obstacle that may arise in their path. I should like to tell them all how profoundly grateful to them I am, and will always be, for their constant and generous trust, patience and cooperation.

To you, Mr. President, we all owe a very special debt of gratitude. As I recalled earlier, because of the importance and sensitivity of many of the issues, our discussions were not easy. On a number of occasions difficult situations arose from which it seemed there was no possible way out, and our exercise appeared to be on the verge of collapse. At one such moment, the most critical of all, you were good enough to decide to involve yourself personally in our work and to promote a series of consultations that proved to be crucial and decisive for the positive result that we finally achieved. We believe that your courageous and effective intervention can serve as an example and an inspiration for the future work of this Assembly and our body. Once again, on behalf of us all, many thanks.

I also wish to take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks to the competent and efficient technical team of the Secretariat — specifically, the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs, headed by Mr. Miles Stoby — for all the constant support they provided to our group and to me personally, despite the fact that such support involved efforts that went far beyond their normal functions and working hours. When one witnesses such motivated and generous activity on the part of officials of the United Nations Secretariat, one realizes how unfair and inaccurate are the references sometimes made to them, often irresponsibly and casually, as an unwieldy, static, inefficient and unproductive body.

Without attempting an exhaustive summary of the contents of this draft resolution — which, as we can all see, is self-explanatory and covers a wide range of issues and subjects — I wish to refer briefly to certain aspects of it that seem to me to be particularly interesting, in some cases because of their very nature and in others because of the special importance attached to them by delegations.

On the question of the funding of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, of particular importance to developing countries is, first, the new appeal for a substantial increase in resources for these activities on a predictable, continuous and assured basis and for intensified efforts to mobilize the political will to achieve this. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council are also asked to examine all aspects of the funding of operational activities, including the three funding mechanisms: voluntary, negotiated and assessed contributions. The Secretary-General is requested to prepare a report analysing the various proposals that have been advanced on innovative funding sources and modalities and setting forth his views on the advantages and disadvantages associated with each.

It would be decided that, at its fifty-second session, the General Assembly should review the new funding modalities referred to in the draft resolution. In the course of that review, a decision regarding the future of the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities would be made. This would mean that if, as we all hope, the new modalities should yield positive and satisfactory results, other mechanisms could quite possibly be consolidated and that the 1996 Pledging Conference may be the last one in the present form.

Moving on to issues concerning the General Assembly, the draft resolution reaffirms the need to promote greater coherence and complementarity between the work of the Second and Third Committees and, in particular, to consider ways of examining in a more coordinated manner issues related to the major United Nations conferences. At the same time, it states that the discussions in those two Committees should not commence until after the end of the general debate in the plenary meetings of the General Assembly. It also provides for exploring the possibility of choosing a principal theme or themes to focus substantive debate under each "cluster" in the agenda. Of particular significance, there is agreement on a new structure and distribution of items for the agenda of the Second Committee.

In the area of documentation, the draft resolution calls for greater use of background documents in the work of the Second Committee, such as the studies and annual reports prepared by the Secretariat, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Bretton Woods institutions, and for the possibility of a joint submission of reports by the secretariats of those entities and the World Trade Organization. It also calls for continued efforts to facilitate distribution of documents in electronic form, particularly through the Internet.

With respect to matters concerning the Economic and Social Council — to which, as can be seen, much of the draft resolution is dedicated — it is reaffirmed that the Council should fully exercise its authority to take final decisions on the activities of its subsidiary bodies and on other matters relating to its system-wide coordination and overall guidance functions in the economic, social and related fields.

It would be decided to hold a four-week substantive session focusing on specific issues each July, instead of a five-week one. Better preparations would be made for the session through, *inter alia*, a more effective use of the organizational session of the Council and open-ended informal consultations convened by the Council's Bureau in order precisely to deal with those issues and to highlight those questions and recommendations requiring the Council's consideration and action. The Bureau would also be requested to meet on a regular basis, to continue to exercise its role as facilitator and to keep informed of the deliberations of relevant intergovernmental mechanisms outside the United Nations system.

The draft resolution affirms that the results of each session of the Council should be strengthened and made more action-oriented, and especially that the outcome of the high-level segment should generally be in the form of agreed conclusions followed up by complementary activities on the part of all relevant bodies and organizations of the system.

As to the coordination and operational activities segments, stress is laid on the decisions to assign to the former the functions of the present joint meetings of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Committee for Programme and Coordination; with respect to the latter, with a view to avoiding repetition of debates, the executive boards of the funds and programmes would be requested to highlight in their respective reports to the Council the issues requiring

examination and to identify action they believe should be taken. Similarly, in connection with the general segment, the subsidiary bodies are requested to include in their reports an executive summary, and to identify clearly and concisely their conclusions, their recommendations and the issues that require the attention of or decisions by the Council.

It also provides that, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter and the rules of procedure, the Council may convene special sessions to address urgent developments in the economic and social fields that may require guidance and coordination by the Council. It also provides that, in order to improve communication and cooperation between the Council and the international financial and trade institutions, the Council should schedule periodically a special high-level meeting just before or just after the semi-annual meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions, with a view to benefiting, to the extent possible, from the appropriate sectoral ministerial participation.

With respect to the functional commissions and expert groups that report to the Council, it would be decided to review, before the end of the fifty-second session of the Assembly, the mandates, membership, functions and working methods of these commissions, groups and other bodies in order to enhance the efficiency and coordination of their studies and the results of their work; the names of some of them are listed. Furthermore, the Council would undertake a review of the regional commissions with a view to enhancing their effectiveness. It would be decided to discontinue the World Food Council, whose functions would be absorbed by the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme.

With respect to the work of the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes for development, there is a call for, among other things, continued efforts to reduce the proliferation and overlapping of meetings throughout the year and to consider on a regular basis possible adjustments to their agendas and reporting procedures and a review of the number and frequency of meetings and sessions. It is also requested that the effective participation of member States and observer States in the executive boards be facilitated, with a review of the relevant provisions and working methods and, when appropriate, their rules of procedure.

The draft resolution also makes a number of recommendations to other working groups of the Assembly that are currently addressing questions relating to restructuring and revitalization, in particular the Working Group on An Agenda for Development and the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. Specifically, the former is called upon to carry out a detailed review of the relationship between the Economic and Social Council and the specialized agencies of the system and, in particular, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/181, a review of issues relating to the strengthening of the relationship between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, and possibly also the World Trade Organization.

The High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System is called upon to consider promoting the use of so-called innovative mechanisms in the General Assembly, in the context of its debate on all the Main Committees of the General Assembly. This group is also charged with considering the functioning and working methods of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), with a view to finding ways of improving programme coordination functions throughout the United Nations system. It is very possible that, in the course of that review, it will be decided to give particular consideration to the issue of the CPC's current coordination functions and responsibilities *vis-à-vis* those of the Economic and Social Council itself.

Turning now to issues relating to the Secretariat, that same High-level Working Group is entrusted with reviewing the possibility of establishing mandates of limited and uniform length for the heads of the programmes, funds and other bodies of the Economic and Social Council and the Assembly. Both Working Groups referred to earlier will be charged with reviewing the present structure and functioning of the Secretariat, including its economic and social departments, and the possible establishment of a post of Deputy Secretary-General for International Cooperation and Development.

On matters relating to inter-agency coordination and to the Secretariat, the draft resolution states that the Administrative Committee on Coordination should have an enhanced function for inter-agency coordination between the organs of the system and should continue to make use of the periodic meetings of high-level Secretariat officials in the economic and social fields, in both cases under the authority of the Secretary-General, and report regularly on all these matters to the Economic and Social Council. Furthermore, the draft resolution recalls the importance of applying the provisions of Article 101 of the Charter and of relevant resolutions.

Before I conclude, allow me to take a few moments to offer some personal thoughts on the matter now before us and on our future work on these issues. As we have noted in our work on An Agenda for Development, as far as the developing countries are concerned, the central issue in the entire reform effort is perhaps that of consolidating, here in the United Nations, a centre for the discussion and political consideration of the major issues relating to development and international cooperation. As has been said repeatedly, the United Nations is a unique forum, not only in that all the countries of the world are represented democratically within it, but also in that it can deal with all these issues from a comprehensive, coherent and integrated perspective. The creators of the United Nations system took this view half a century ago when they wisely provided for, among other things, the establishment of organic links between the political centre of the system and the subsidiary agencies that take responsibility for sectoral issues.

Today we need to go back to and update that initial vision by improving our intergovernmental working machinery, as indicated in the draft resolution now before us, by modernizing and strengthening the relevant areas of the Secretariat and by revitalizing the relationship between the United Nations and the specialized agencies. Indeed, it is impossible to conceive of global and sustainable economic and social progress based on fairness and solidarity without a comprehensive and coherent concept of cooperation for development — including, as the Secretary-General has recalled, a vital ethical element — and without conception and coordination here in the United Nations in way that is not disjointed, scattered and possibly inconsistent.

How can we give the United Nations sufficient authority and credibility to consider effectively in this forum major global economic issues? How can we achieve a renewed and necessary North-South dialogue in which, for example, many of the important issues that today are being considered either in the Bretton Woods institutions alone, or separately by large countries in groups such as the Group of Seven, can be brought here and discussed by all of us? This is precisely the great challenge we are facing. We believe that the draft resolution that we are about to adopt could be a new and important step in this direction and that, as many have pointed out, it should make a significant and substantive political contribution to the working groups that are now addressing issues of reform in the United Nations, particularly the two that I have mentioned.

In our view, in the economic and social areas, this may require an in-depth consideration of aspects that are highly controversial but that are nevertheless at the heart of these issues. For example, we will have to continue to analyse the entire question of the Economic and Social Council, including — and why not? — the various proposals put forward concerning its possible conversion into one of the various versions of what has been called, among other things, an "economic security council". Although this topic was not specifically addressed in our discussions on this draft resolution, it frequently came up as a potential issue on which there is a wide range of opinions and, of course, very different positions, an issue attracting a great deal of attention.

Similarly, 50 years after the New Hampshire conference, the international community should be able to consider proposals to undertake, under United Nations auspices and in the light of its fundamental principles of international cooperation, a possible review of the mandates, functions and working methods of the international financial institutions, including the review, if appropriate, of their constituting agreements — similar to the study on trade that led to the decision to launch the Uruguay Round in order to try to modernize, comprehensively and effectively, the undertaking begun in 1948 at the Havana conference. It has been suggested that this could take place, for example, at the proposed international conference on financing for development, which could be prepared and carried out with the support of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

We should not be afraid to discuss, seriously and dispassionately, any of these delicate but fundamental issues, since — as was proved once again in our negotiations — in this Organization, on these issues, we have promoted more and more the rule of consensus, and the opinions and interests of all countries, even the weakest, will always be respected and taken into account.

As we see it, in order to achieve our objectives, we need not go to extremes. It should not be necessary to create new United Nations organs or agencies, or to change the existing ones too radically. This is because, first, the General Assembly has been indisputably confirmed as the primary global political setting to which everything, sooner or later, in one way or another, must be referred; and because, secondly, it is recognized that the Economic and Social Council, as the central coordinating organ so clearly provided for in the Charter, together with its subsidiary machinery, can and should be improved and strengthened to a much greater extent than

has already been done, and that it could thus become capable of extraordinary effectiveness. Finally, I believe there is consensus that a necessary condition for achieving a genuine and integrated reform of the Organization and the system as a whole is the definitive resolution of the current financial crisis, or, as some prefer to call it, the payment crisis.

With continued mutual trust, good faith and firm political will on the part of all, we shall be able to build and achieve a great deal on these initial issues, as well as on those that will undoubtedly arise in the future.

The President: The General Assembly will now proceed to the consideration of draft resolution A/50/L.73. I call on the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Perfiliev (Director, General Assembly Affairs Division): I should like to inform members that, under the terms of paragraph 3 of draft resolution A/50/L.73, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to implement the further measures for restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields falling within his responsibility, as set out in annex I to that draft resolution. The Assembly, in paragraph 4, would further request the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its fifty-second session, through the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1997, on the implementation of the present resolution.

The adoption of the draft resolution and its annex I would have implications for the programme of work of the Organization. In particular, the shortening of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council from five to four weeks, the discontinuation of the joint meetings of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Committee for Programme and Coordination, and the discontinuation of the World Food Council would lead to reductions in expenditures which would be reflected in the performance report.

At the same time, a number of additional reports are being requested from the Secretary-General. While every effort will be made to absorb these additional responsibilities, the Secretary-General is obliged to state the implications of these decisions for the workload of the Secretariat in terms of quality and timeliness in the production of documentation, given the budget reductions mandated by the General Assembly for the current biennium.

The President: The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/50/L.73, entitled "Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields".

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/50/L.73?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 50/227).

The President: Before calling on representatives wishing to speak in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Berrocal Soto (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the Costa Rican Government, and in my capacity as Chairman of the Group of 77 and China, I wish to express my feelings of deepest sorrow and solidarity in connection with the natural disasters that have caused such enormous harm in Bangladesh in recent days. To the Government of Bangladesh, I say that our Group is prepared to carry out any task requested of it in order to help promote the greatest possible degree of international cooperation in the efforts to restore normal conditions in Bangladesh.

The work and negotiating efforts undertaken over the last several weeks in the Working Group on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields are of the greatest importance in the context of the general process of reform and restructuring of the United Nations.

The successful conclusion of these deliberations on 15 May and today's meeting of the General Assembly are a clear reflection of the will to change that motivates the States Members of the United Nations. The process of reform and restructuring is under way. Certainly, there is still a long way to go; many important negotiations to be concluded and many deep-seated differences remain to be addressed. Yet the first step has been taken.

In my capacity as Chairman of the Group of 77 plus China, I would like first of all to thank and congratulate Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, President of the General Assembly, on his timely initiatives, which enabled the Working Group to achieve concrete results. The drafting of the resolution just adopted by the General Assembly

was in no small measure facilitated by the apt and intelligent intercession of the President. I also wish to extend my congratulations to Ambassador Oscar de Rojas, Deputy Permanent Representative of Venezuela, for his patient and firm guidance of these complex negotiations.

The resolution we have just adopted is without doubt an example of what constructive negotiations and cooperation among all groups and delegations can achieve. Although the process was arduous and difficult, all sides showed flexibility and a willingness to negotiate, and made the compromises necessary to reach consensus. The outcome was the draft resolution on which the General Assembly has just taken action.

This task of restructuring is not an isolated exercise, but rather an important component of the overall process of reform of the United Nations system. It should be linked with the work being carried out by the Open-ended Working Group on an Agenda for Development, the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, and the Working Groups on An Agenda for Peace and on reform of the Security Council.

The developing countries have been pioneers in this process of reform. The Group of 77 and China have firmly stated that the United Nations should respond appropriately to the new challenges of the international situation and to the demands of Member States. This change should be undertaken with a clearly defined strategy and objectives. Otherwise it will be neither effective nor lasting. The reform process must therefore be approached in a coherent, integrated manner. The consensus reached in the Working Group on revitalization and restructuring is an important step towards the reform that the Group of 77 and China support in the United Nations.

Our support for this reform process is clear-cut, and neither responds nor is subject to conditionalities of any kind. It is far from my intention to reopen the debate on the various points of the resolution the General Assembly has just adopted. Allow me just to comment briefly on some paragraphs of the resolution on which the Group of 77 and China would like its position to be clearly understood in the context of the consensus reached with other groups.

The first area on which I should like to comment relates to the funding of operational activities for development. We would like to express our concern that after two years of negotiations no result has emerged on the issue of financing in the framework of the General Assembly's working group on new modalities for funding operational activities for development of the United Nations system. In fact, the two reports of the Secretary-General presented to that working group have never been seriously considered. We trust that the governing bodies of the funds and programmes will set their targets as soon as possible, in conformity with the present resolution. In this connection, the Group of 77 and China continue to be concerned about the uncertainties of the current system based upon voluntary contributions by donor countries, and their repercussions on the availability of core resources.

With respect, next, to the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities, the Group of 77 and China consider the Pledging Conference to be an opportunity to renew the commitment of Member States to United Nations operational activities for development. We reiterate our view that the Conference provides a useful forum to heighten awareness of the importance of the development programmes that the world Organization promotes and implements and to build support for them.

In recent years many developing countries have increased their contributions to the funding of operational activities for development, and they see the Pledging Conference as a platform to express their political will to participate in sharing the financial burden. Therefore, in our Group's view, the status quo should be maintained, and the Conference should not be done away with until the review of the proposed new mechanism is complete.

The Group of 77 and China wish to reaffirm that the organizational session of the Economic and Social Council should continue to be the appropriate framework for the organization and preparation of meetings of the Economic and Social Council. It is our understanding that the Bureau must perform its role of facilitator in a very transparent manner and that it must not, de facto, take over the functions of the Council itself. Transparency is one of the key unwritten rules of the United Nations. What has been agreed upon in relation to the Bureau should not in any way be interpreted as assigning new functions or expanding the Bureau. In this regard, the position of the Group of 77 and China is definitive and very clear.

We underscore the important role of the Committee on Programme and Coordination (CPC), which deals not only with economics and development but with all United Nations programmes. In the view of the Group of 77 and China, the study and assessment of the coordination

functions of the CPC and the Economic and Social Council should be carried out within the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. In that negotiating forum, the developing countries will coordinate their positions and present their points of view through the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China.

Our Group believes that the effective participation of observer member States in the meetings of the executive boards of funds and programmes is one of the key issues of this resolution. In our view, a concept of restrictive participation on the boards cannot lead to effectiveness and efficiency. On the contrary, it is an intergovernmental forum, and the United Nations system should take advantage of its universality and diversity of views.

Furthermore, the developing countries cannot agree that the concept of special interests should be a guiding principle of the reform of the governing bodies of the funds and programmes. Clearly, this would constitute an anachronism given the marked increase in the membership of the United Nations in recent years and the need for reform to be built on the current trends of democratization in international relations and a participatory approach to development. The Group of 77 and China firmly support both of these trends.

The Group of 77 and China would have welcomed a firm decision to reduce the number of meetings of the executive boards. It is inconsistent to have agreed to shorten the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council while maintaining the many meetings of the governing bodies, thus limiting the capacity of small delegations — which, we should bear in mind, represent the majority of the Member States — to participate properly in the deliberations of executive bodies.

The Group of 77 and China firmly supports strengthened coordination between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions. However, we strongly believe that such coordination should not marginalize the leading and active role of the United Nations in economic policy and decision-making worldwide. Diminishing its capacity undermine the principles clearly established in the San Francisco Charter and the purposes and principles that inspire the participation of the developing world in the United Nations system. Strengthening that capacity, as the developing countries propose, is the primary objective of this process of reform and restructuring of the United Nations. We believe that the mandate to strengthen cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions should be placed in that context.

With regard to the length of service of the heads of United Nations programmes and funds, the Group of 77 and China does not understand our partners' reluctance to accept the concept of equitable geographical distribution and fair rotation among the various regions in appointments to high-level posts in the secretariats of those funds and programmes. We believe that such a balance is essential to the process of democratizing and strengthening the United Nations.

The Group of 77 and China would like to stress that annex II was systematically developed on the basis of agenda priorities for the Second Committee and the Third Committee. Our Group believes that the Agenda for Development will strengthen constructive dialogue between countries with a view to enhancing and revitalizing international economic cooperation through development partnership between the developing and the developed countries. That spirit of cooperation and partnership is a sign of the times in the 1990s.

As the two Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group on an Agenda for Development have said, the documents that they prepared, which are still under negotiation, were drafted for the most part before the final results of the Working Group's negotiations on restructuring and revitalization were known. It is therefore necessary to adjust the text accordingly in order to make the Working Group's results consistent with the resolution that the General Assembly has adopted today by consensus.

In conclusion, our work to strengthen and restructure the United Nations is designed not only to meet present and future challenges, but also to enhance and increase international cooperation. In this regard, since the beginning of the 1990s Member States have been engaged in an important effort to obtain consensus on, and defining the terms of, joint work in such sensitive areas as the protection of children, the environment, human rights, the reduction of natural disasters, population problems, social development, women's rights and human settlements. The agreements reached at international conferences and summits constitute a genuine programme of work and action for the United Nations.

The reforms that we have adopted pursuant to the original mandate provided for in resolution 48/162 will endow the Economic and Social Council with the

necessary means to fulfil properly and more efficiently, its responsibilities and obligations under the Charter of the United Nations.

The President: I thank the representative of Costa Rica for his kind words addressed to me.

Mrs. Albright (United States of America): The United States welcomes the General Assembly's adoption of this resolution, which is intended to advance and build upon reforms of the United Nations in the economic and social fields. We commend the Chairman of the Working Group, Ambassador Oscar de Rojas of Venezuela, for his patience, perseverance and leadership in bringing us together to achieve this outcome.

You, Mr. President, also deserve special thanks for the constructive role you have played in sustaining the process and facilitating negotiations.

My Government considers this resolution a significant breakthrough in our collective efforts to reform the United Nations system. It complements the achievements made at the ninth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in South Africa one week ago, as well as the progress being made at the meetings of the various United Nations regional commissions. Taken together, these steps will add momentum to the trend towards reform throughout the United Nations system. By reform, we mean a United Nations that better and more efficiently serves the people our Governments represent.

The resolution before us includes a number of provisions in which my Government believes all members can take satisfaction and pride. These include provisions designed, first, to promote accountability, including budgetary oversight and evaluation; second, to encourage participation in the Economic and Social Council by outside experts and organizations; third, to improve coordination between heads of agencies and departments and between subsidiary bodies; fourth, to direct the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to place greater emphasis and resources on doing rather than talking and to eliminate unnecessary reports; fifth, to require a review by the Economic and Social Council of the functional and regional economic commissions for the purpose of making those bodies more efficient and effective; sixth, to improve communications and cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions; seventh, to eliminate non-functioning bodies, such as the World Food Council; and, eighth, to discontinue duplicative meetings, such as the annual joint meeting of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Administrative Committee on Coordination, and initiate steps to end the annual Pledging Conference.

These goals are important, and our decision to move towards them shows that the spirit of reform is broad-based and growing. Reform is not, however, an event — it is a process. Today's resolution is one step along that road. There are many more to go. This is reflected in the resolution itself, which establishes a framework for future consideration of issues upon which we are not able at this point fully to agree. My Government was disappointed, for example, that we did not, in this resolution, give more formal recognition to the use of the expanded Bureau of the Economic and Social Council. We would have liked to see the coordinating role of the Council enhanced by requiring that body to assume the related functions of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, and we would have liked to end the rotation of the Council's substantive sessions.

In addition, while we would have preferred outright discontinuation of the Pledging Conference, we have accepted the consensus outcome on that issue. We do so with the understanding that the Pledging Conference at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly will be the last such Conference scheduled pending the outcome of the review called for in this resolution.

Where this resolution establishes a process and forum to continue consideration of the open issues, my delegation will continue to press these reforms vigorously. Where this resolution is silent, as in the case of the Economic and Social Council rotation, the United States will pursue separate opportunities to advance these reforms.

In summary, the United States believes that this is an important resolution that will contribute significantly to the goal we all share of a more effective and productive United Nations system. It marks another milestone along the way towards the revitalization of the United Nations, but there remains a great deal of work to be done. My Government is committed to working with all Member States as a partner in this effort, and we look forward to achieving further milestones in the weeks and months ahead.

Before concluding, I should like to offer my Government's condolences to all those who suffered so much during the natural disaster in Bangladesh, about which we heard at the beginning of this meeting.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following countries associated with the Union join in this statement: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. Norway also joins the Union in the statement.

The European Union welcomes the adoption of the resolution on further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. We believe that the resolution provides a step forward in our endeavours to promote the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, including in the forums providing guidance, coordination and supervision. In our view, resolution 48/162 remains one of the main pillars of our efforts in this respect and the resolution just adopted contains further important steps forward.

We are satisfied with the fact that agreement was reached on the issue of funding operational activities for development.

The European Union has a positive assessment of the decisions relative to the promotion of greater coherence and complementarity between the work of the Second and Third Committees and the need for a more coordinated consideration of the issues related to the follow-up of the major United Nations conferences. Equally positive is the enhancement of the activities of the Economic and Social Council with regard to the preparation and outcome of its segments. The Bureau's role as facilitator is reinforced and made more functional to the organizational needs and preparations of the Council.

The European Union has a very positive assessment of the decision to undertake a complete review of the functional commissions, expert groups and regional commissions. Finally, there are decisions — the abolition of the World Food Council, the shortening of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council from five to four weeks, the abolition of some other meetings and the possible abolition of the Pledging Conference — that, without entailing major structural reforms, still have an important symbolic value that attests to the General Assembly's will to rationalize the use of resources.

Nevertheless, there are areas in which the European Union would have hoped for a more forward-looking resolution. In fact, we would have preferred a decision regarding greater use of innovative mechanisms in the work of the Second and Third Committees and more decisive measures to foster cooperation between the two, and we had hoped for a more unequivocal decision in favour of joint meetings in certain cases.

Now we will have to ensure that all the processes of review envisaged in the resolution are duly carried forward. In this respect, we look forward to further fruitful discussions in the context of the Working Groups on an Agenda for Development and on the Strengthening of the United Nations System.

In conclusion, I wish to express the European Union's greatest appreciation to Ambassador Oscar de Rojas, whose dedication, patience and unflinching negotiating efforts made the successful conclusion of this negotiation possible.

Finally, on behalf of the European Union, allow me to express to you, Mr. President, our gratitude for your commitment, impulse and active supervision of the negotiations.

Before I conclude, please allow the European Union to join in condolences to the Government and people of Bangladesh for the tragic event which has just occurred.

Mr. Choulkov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian delegation wishes to associate itself with the words of thanks addressed to you, Mr. President, and to underscore its deep gratitude to Ambassador de Rojas for his efforts and patience, which allowed us to complete the resolution that has been adopted here today.

The delegation of the Russian Federation has from the very outset attached great importance to negotiations on this issue. It has actively participated in them and put forward specific comments and proposals, many of which are reflected in the agreed document.

We consider this resolution an important step in the overall reform of the United Nations, which is being carried out at a very difficult time for the Organization. The adoption of this resolution, in our view, will give further impetus to efforts in other negotiating processes aimed at reform.

We, too, should like the provisions of this resolution to be appropriately understood by the Secretariat so that the necessary measures can be taken for their speedy and active implementation. We have high hopes for, among

other things, the enhancement of the practical role and action-oriented nature of the Economic and Social Council and the strengthening of its coordinating function and independence within its mandate under the Charter of the United Nations.

We expect practical results from the studies called for in the resolution regarding the functional effectiveness of various subsidiary bodies, which would make it possible to move forward along the road to rationalizing and streamlining the work of the Organization.

We would like particularly to note two compromises that made it possible, in the final analysis, to achieve consensus on issues that at the outset seemed impossible to resolve. We believe that good will and consideration of the interests of all partners will predominate in further measures taken to implement this resolution in the future.

To conclude these brief remarks, my delegation would like to associate itself with the condolences expressed to the people of Bangladesh in connection with the tragic event that has befallen them.

Mr. Lozano (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish first to express our thanks to Ambassador Oscar de Rojas of Venezuela for his patience and devotion in his role as coordinator of the negotiations on the draft resolution on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related spheres. We should also like to thank you, Mr. President, for your guidance and leadership.

We are convinced that with the adoption of the draft resolution contained in document A/50/L.73 we have succeeded in taking an important step forward towards the objective of revitalizing the economic and social sectors of the United Nations, so as to permit them fully to discharge their mandate in the area of international cooperation for development, as embodied in the Charter.

We wish in particular to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the importance of the request that the Secretary-General prepare a study with a comprehensive assessment of the implications of the present arrangements for the sessions of the Economic and Social Council. We hope to have that study as early as possible. It should address the various factors — including, of course, the financial aspect — associated with the current practice of rotating meetings of the Economic and Social Council between Geneva and New York.

Despite the achievements made to date, we believe that much still remains to be done. Unfortunately, many acute economic and social problems continue to afflict the great majority of the planet's population. This requires the international community to redouble its efforts to give due attention to the economic and social development problems of the developing countries. The commitments embodied in the resolution that we have just adopted are a positive step in that direction.

Lastly, we should like to express our hope that the results achieved in the negotiations on the issue of restructuring and revitalizing the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields will serve as a stimulus leading to the early conclusion of An Agenda for Development.

Mr. Baillargeon (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): We, too, should like to commend the efforts, imagination and patience of Ambassador de Rojas of Venezuela, without which we would not have been successful. Through you, Mr. President, who have supported him, we thank him most sincerely.

Despite all these efforts, however, and though we do not wish to inject a bitter note into the conclusion of this process, my delegation cannot but have mixed feelings regarding the results we have achieved. While recognizing the definite progress achieved by this resolution, we are not sure if the outside world will find in it the hallmark of any true change. Nor are we sure if that same outside world will understand how much energy and how many hours went into this exercise, which to some may appear to consist merely of simple improvements in the operating modalities of the system. This apparent contradiction may be all the more difficult to explain because the avowed goal of all was to restore to the economic and social sector the important role assigned to it by the Charter. Unfortunately, this wish to restore the system's credibility and relevance is not always apparent in the reading of a text that all too often confines itself to merely improving the status quo.

It was undoubtedly because of these perception problems that it was so important to discontinue the World Food Council. Had this not been done, we would have provided more ammunition to those who criticize the system and claim that it is incapable of taking stock of itself. Beyond this symbolic gesture, the true achievement of this exercise is undeniably in the strengthening and clarification of the role of the Economic and Social Council as arbiter and decision

maker with respect to the system's priorities. However timidly affirmed, all the elements of a more dynamic Economic and Social Council are there, including the facilitating role of its Bureau, whose importance we wish to underscore.

Other sections of the document are certainly less glorious, confining themselves either to half-decisions that defer things to a later stage or to vague language that is open to various interpretations. The decisions on the Committee for Programme and Coordination, on pledging conferences and on the initiation of certain reviews clearly fall into the first category. As for the fuzzy decisions, we should like to offer our interpretation of two of them. The first relates to the participation of observers in the governing bodies of funds and programmes, where the proposed measures cannot detract from the improvements resulting from the reduction in the size of the boards. Similarly, the innovative mechanisms for dialogue that already exist within the Second and Third Committees cannot be held hostage for the sake of extending this practice to other Committees; it will fall to the Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System to consider and decide on this matter.

(*spoke in English*)

Much remains to be done. The true test for this resolution will lie with our determination to implement it. In order to achieve this implementation, a number of the reviews called for — specifically, the review of the regional commissions and the review of cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions — must be carried out, and must benefit from documented recommendations from the Office of the Inspector-General. Only with such expert input can the Economic and Social Council undertake an informed discussion of these issues.

In other words, the difference between real success and simply another document will depend on two factors: first, the Secretariat's ability to contribute more dynamically, particularly through the work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, and, secondly, the political will required to allow the Economic and Social Council to discharge its role fully without automatic recourse to the General Assembly.

Canada's demonstrated flexibility, even in the face of some rather dissatisfying elements, stems from a deep conviction: our belief that the reform dynamic is irreversibly engaged and that the group on the Agenda for Development, the group on the strengthening of the United Nations system, and even the Secretary-General himself will pick up where we have left off and will continue to connect the dots. It is thus in that spirit that we joined in adopting this resolution and that we agreed upon its very important contribution to reform.

We remind the Assembly that, for us, the word "reform" means a strengthening and affirmation of the United Nations system in the economic and social fields.

Mr. Avalle (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish first of all to convey the condolences of my delegation to the people of Bangladesh, and to express our solidarity with them at this sad time.

Turning to the question of the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, I wish to express the thanks and appreciation of my delegation for the efforts of Ambassador Oscar de Rojas of Venezuela, who, in his work on this resolution, often succeeded in squaring the circle.

Because my statement supplements that made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I shall confine myself to commenting briefly on the resolution's annex on the funding of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. My delegation attaches special importance to the financial arrangements on which we have agreed in this resolution. We believe that they will make it possible, given the necessary political will, to secure a more predictable flow of financial resources for the system of operational activities.

Moreover, we believe that this system will allow the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Executive Boards of the funds and programmes effectively to carry out their respective mandated tasks of intergovernmental oversight.

In this connection, we congratulate Japan, the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, France and Switzerland, which have once again demonstrated political will by agreeing on the level of their respective contributions to the United Nations Capital Development Fund. We believe that such initiatives give real meaning to the decisions we take here in the General Assembly; without such initiatives, our efforts would be without effect in the real world.

Mr. Tanaka (Japan): My delegation would like to make a brief statement on paragraph 47 of annex I of the resolution we have just adopted. Before doing so, I should like to associate myself with previous speakers and to express the condolences of my Government to the people and the Government of Bangladesh.

I would like to express our appreciation and respect to Ambassador Oscar de Rojas for his extraordinary efforts and energy in guiding the consultations on the text we have just adopted, and also to the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for providing political leadership at the final stage.

Despite the adoption of this resolution, reform of the United Nations in the economic and social fields remains a very difficult objective, and Japan is of the view that in the future Member States will need to make even greater efforts in order to achieve truly concrete and significant progress. Japan is convinced that the key to achieving the general objective of reform lies in the strengthening of the Organization's functions; reform in the area of development should also be considered from this standpoint.

In this connection, I would like to refer to the Tokyo Conference on Development Strategy, which was held in March with participants from a number of countries. Among the salient results of the conference was the emergence of a consensus on the need to formulate a new development strategy in response to the changing international environment. There was also a general sentiment that in order to formulate and implement such a strategy based on a new partnership and on the joint responsibility of donor and recipient countries, the United Nations needs to be reformed in the economic and social fields.

It was for this reason that Japan made a proposal to strengthen the functions of the Economic and Social Council. We strongly hope that, in the Open-ended Working Group on an Agenda for Development, in the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, and in the General Assembly, discussions on reform will intensify, and that, taking into account Japan's suggestion, they will lead to the strengthening of the functions of the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Florencio (Brazil): First of all, I associate myself with the condolences expressed by other delegations to the people of Bangladesh.

I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the successful conclusion of the work of the Working Group on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. The Brazilian delegation tried to contribute in a constructive, active way to the difficult, complex debates of that working group. The wide diversity of the fields covered in those debates indicates the magnitude of the challenges faced by the working group, and therefore explains the importance of the resolution that we have just adopted.

It would be difficult to attempt a synthesis of the most relevant aspects examined by the working group and reflected in today's resolution. Indeed, the statement made by Ambassador Fernando Berrocal Soto of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China reflected some of the major aspects dealt with in the resolution we have adopted, and at the same reflected some of the concerns of my delegation on issues covered in the working group's debate.

I will therefore limit myself to mentioning that, among many other relevant points, my delegation attributes importance to the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, a body which deals not only with economics and development, but with all programmes on the agenda of the United Nations. That is why we deemed it adequate to transfer the discussion of the Committee's role to the appropriate section of the High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System.

At the same time, my delegation attributes particular priority to the section dealing with strengthening cooperation between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. On different occasions we have had the opportunity to reiterate the importance that we attribute to that issue.

Before concluding these brief remarks, I wish to strongly underscore the competence, dedication, patience and negotiating capacity which were the main features of the conduct of Ambassador Oscar de Rojas of Venezuela as Chairman of the Working Group.

The President: We have heard the last explanation of vote after the vote. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 23?

It was so decided

Programme of work

The President: I wish to recall that at the 96th plenary meeting of the General Assembly, on 20 December 1995, consideration of agenda item 99, entitled "Agenda for development" was concluded inadvertently, when it should have remained open to enable the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on an Agenda for Development to report to the Assembly during the fiftieth session.

By its decision 49/497 of 14 September 1995, the Assembly had decided that the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group

> "should continue its work during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, taking into account the progress achieved during the forty-ninth session, with a view to finalizing an agenda for development, and report thereon to the Assembly at its fiftieth session."

In this regard, I wish to inform members that a corrigendum to the official records of the 96th plenary meeting will be issued to reflect the fact that agenda item 99 is still open.

In accordance with decision 49/497, the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group will be considered directly in plenary meeting.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.